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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6327
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0452
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 2277
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0103
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 000419

SIPDIS

WHA FOR A/S SHANNON, DAS MADISON
WHA/CAR - JOE TILGHMAN
DEPT PASS TO CENTRAL AMERICAN CARIBBEAN BASIN COLLECTIVE
TREASURY - SARA GRAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [MARR](#) [SNAR](#) [ETRD](#)
EFIN, JM, CU, XL
SUBJECT: JAMAICA/CUBA: PRIME MINISTER BRUCE GOLDING'S
HIGH-PROFILE VISIT TO HAVANA

REF: A. KINGSTON 414 (121338Z MAY 08)(NOTAL)
[1](#)B. KINGSTON 219 (121200Z MAR 08)(NOTAL)
[1](#)C. KINGSTON 245 (191809Z MAR 08)(NOTAL)
[1](#)D. KINGSTON 364 (291558Z APR 08)(NOTAL)
[1](#)E. KINGSTON 176 (271832Z FEB 08)(NOTAL)
[1](#)F. 07 KINGSTON 1419 (172048Z SEP 07)(NOTAL)

Classified By: Amb. Brenda L. Johnson, Reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

1.(C) Jamaican Prime Minister Bruce Golding's highly visible trip to Cuba May 5-7 along with much of his cabinet underscores his evident intention to look beyond this U.S. Administration, and signals a significant break with traditional Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) policy of opposition to Cuba's communist regime and support for U.S. foreign policy in the region. Following Golding's decision not to attend the March White House meeting of Caribbean leaders, Golding with his Cuba trip evidently believes a change of Administration in November will bring a set of U.S. leaders and policies much more to his liking, and that in the meantime there is no significant price to pay for thumbing his nose at us. This is certainly the case domestically, as press coverage of Golding's trip has been fawning to the extreme. The Prime Minister is being hailed across the spectrum for being "pragmatic" in breaking with the JLP's past. We note with dismay that Golding apparently made no effort to persuade Raul Castro and his regime to open up his dictatorial society and to release political prisoners. However, U.S. objections to the Cuban regime are dismissed by nearly everyone here as hypocrisy given our detention of "political prisoners" in Guantanamo. Golding's views on the U.S. embargo are no secret, having been conveyed directly to DAS Madison over a breakfast in Kingston on February 29 (reftel B).

2.(C) The paradox here is that Golding's domestic ideology and policy objectives (free markets, economic growth, transparency, rule of law, anti-corruption, strengthening democracy) are much closer to the U.S. than to Cuba or Venezuela. The Cuban message traditionally has fallen on more fertile ground in the opposition People's National Party (PNP), which is now out of power after 18 years of increasingly corrupt and mismanaged government (reftel C). Looking at Jamaica's domestic politics, Golding may have partly sought to bolster his left flank with his Cuba trip.

A snap general election is possible in Jamaica's near future (reftel D). The JLP is said to enjoy a comfortable lead in the polls and in funding. However, for it to call another general election so soon after the last might not be very popular. Rising fuel and food prices, and the JLP's failure so far to stem Jamaica's soaring crime rate, suggest that turnout might be low. Should the PNP obtain an infusion of cash from its traditional socialist friends in the region, they could leap back into contention. Golding's trip to Cuba gave him an opportunity to let the Cubans know that the JLP pursuit of malfeasance and misfeasance in the administration of the Cuban light bulb program (reftels D,E) was not directed at them but at PNP corruption, and that the JLP is a more effective partner for Cuban technical programs. (Note: At a May 8 lunch, the UK and Canadian High Commissioners told CDA they thought this was plausible as one of Golding's motivations for the Cuba trip, which perplexed them as much as us).

3.(C) A further motivation -- personal pique -- for Golding's trip was suggested in recent comments by Jamaican Ambassador Anthony Johnson to the husband of former U.S. Ambassador Sue Cobb at the May 10 American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ) Gala in Miami. Anthony Johnson reportedly said that the U.S. had done "nothing" for Jamaica since Golding took power, in contrast to the way the Reagan Administration had reached out to and supported Jamaica under his political godfather Seaga, even including a trip to the island in 1982.

Anthony Johnson reportedly went on to refer to our halving of the USAID budget for Jamaica in recent years. Golding, an intelligent but proud and brittle man, is still fighting Seaga loyalists for control of the JLP, and reportedly has

made similar comments to others dating back to December. Though hardly excusing Golding's recent actions, it is true that his initial request for hurricane reconstruction money (reftel F) met with silence from us, and other GOJ requests have proven difficult or impossible for us to meet. These frustrations could have fed his growing sense of being slighted by the JLP's former benefactor. Concerning the White House invitation, Anthony Johnson implied it had bordered on insulting for Golding to be invited to a "photo op" with no agenda prepared in advance for serious discussions.

4.(C) What is to be done? We suggest that Washington consider calling in Ambassador Anthony Johnson at a senior level to convey our displeasure at the apparent lack of balance in Golding's remarks and overall agenda with the Cuban government, specifically his inattention to continuing human rights problems. We do not believe Golding's trip should have any adverse effect on our assistance to Jamaica, which is designed to help the economy and security situation here and is in the U.S. interest in securing our "Third Border." Our cooperation at the working level on law enforcement and other issues has not been affected by these regrettable high-level actions by Bruce Golding. Johnson